

Discrimination: A Question of Roles

Key Points

- Discrimination is treating people differently because of **who they are, where they come from, or the groups they belong to.**
- Discrimination in a VISTA service setting is **illegal** when it targets a person or group based on such **non-merit factors** as race, gender or religion, also known as **protected classes**. The Corporation for National and Community Service defines as protected classes the following:
 - Race, color, or national origin
 - Sex/gender
 - Disability (physical or mental)
 - Age
 - Religion
 - Political affiliation
 - Sexual orientation
- Illegal discrimination:
 - BOTH targets a person or group **because of a difference AND singles them out for different treatment** (different treatment, combined with a difference, is NOT illegal discrimination);
 - May be a **one-time occurrence** or **part of an ongoing pattern**; and
 - **Can happen to anyone.**
- If you experience or witness what you think is discrimination, you should:
 1. **Approach and talk to the person** you suspect of engaging in the discriminatory behavior directly yourself, if you feel safe and comfortable doing so.
 2. If talking to the person directly does not work, or if you do not feel safe and comfortable doing so, you can **talk to your VISTA supervisor.**
 3. If you cannot go to your VISTA supervisor, or you do and the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, you can contact your **Corporation state office** using the contact information provided in the binder you will receive at your Pre-Service Orientation or online on the VISTA Campus at www.vistacampus.org.
 4. Finally, you can contact the Corporation's **Office of Civil Rights and Inclusiveness** (OCRI) using the following contact information. If you and/or your VISTA supervisor or state office contact chooses to contact OCRI, note that a claim **must be made within 45 days** of an incident.

1201 New York Avenue, NW
Suite 10800
Washington, DC 20525
(202) 606-7503 (hotline)
(202) 606-3472 (TDD)
(202) 606-3465 (fax)
eo@cns.gov (email)